



# **Dos & Don'ts for Faith-Based Organizations**

Presenter:  
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# Guiding Principles

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*Compassionate care on the same footing  
as non-religious groups*

- A level playing field
- Within Constitutional guidelines




# Guiding Principles

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*Because the area of church-state relations is complicated, this presentation is not a comprehensive authoritative statement of the law.*

*Specific programs may have some different requirements. You may wish to consult with a lawyer or the agency that administers the program that interests you.*



# Limits on Federal Funding

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**Federal funding cannot fund “inherently religious” activities**

*This means...*

- Funds may NOT pay for religious worship, prayer, instruction, or evangelization.
- But ALL of these activities can be carried out with private funds.

*In other words...*

**“No God-Talk on Uncle Sam’s Dime.”**



# Limits on Federal Funding

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## Keep Religious Activities Separate:

### *Content*

- Keep focused on program topics

### *Time or Place*

- Inherently religious activities should be held at a different *time* or *place* than government-funded services

### *Careful Accounting*



# Limits on Federal Funding

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## Participation Must Be Voluntary

Program participants may be invited to join in religious services or events

***BUT***

Participation must be *voluntary* and decision can have *no bearing* on services delivered



# What You *Can* Do

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## Organizations may retain:

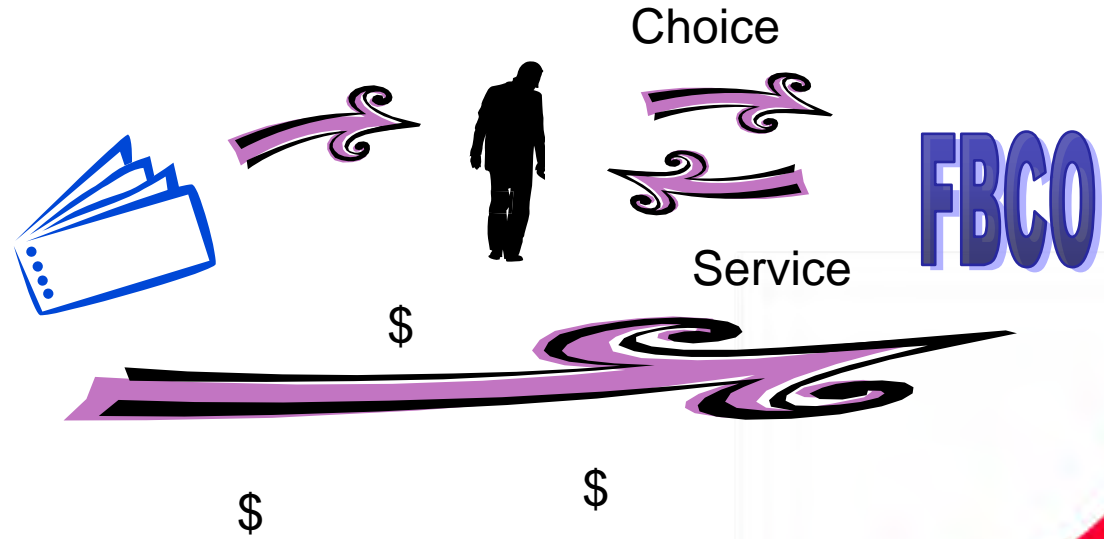
- ✓ Religious symbols and icons
- ✓ Religious name
- ✓ Board members
- ✓ Mission Statement
- ✓ Religious activities – so long as they are privately funded, separate, and voluntary



# Vouchers

A voucherized program allows an individual to choose from among several qualified service providers, and service providers have the freedom to integrate religious components.

**Vouchers:**



*Note – Most government programs do NOT involve vouchers*



# Frequently Asked Questions

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Q.

*If someone asks me about my faith, can I share it with them?*

A.

Yes, you may answer briefly, but a longer discussion should be postponed in order to avoid using government funds for a religious activity.



# Frequently Asked Questions

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Q.

*Can we have religious activities with our staff and volunteers in the presence of those we are helping?*

A.

Yes, but the activity must be *voluntary* for program participants.



# Frequently Asked Questions

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Q.

*Will we have to change the way we hire employees?*

A.

No, in most cases. The Civil Rights Act recognizes the right of religious groups to hire employees who share their faith. But some programs may have different rules



# Frequently Asked Questions


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Q.

*Can we use Federal funds to pay staff salaries?*

A.

Yes, as long as the staff person spends his or her time on program activities – and not inherently religious activities. If a staffer splits time between program and church activities, keep careful records.



# Frequently Asked Questions

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Q.

*If our organization receives a grant from the Federal government, can it choose to deny services to some people?*

A.

No. If you take Federal money you *must* provide services to *all* who are eligible.



# Frequently Asked Questions

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Q.

*Can we buy religious materials with Federal funds?*

A.

No. Do not use government funds to buy religious materials. This applies not only to Bibles, Torahs, and Korans, but also to materials used for religious activities.



# Frequently Asked Questions

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Q.

*Can we still get government funds if religion is integrated throughout our program?*

A.

In most cases, no, because inherently religious activities must be privately-funded, separate, and voluntary.

*Exception: Vouchers*



# Frequently Asked Questions

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Q.

*What happens if we violate any of these rules?*

A.

You may

- Lose grant funds
- Have to repay funds received
- Be subject to legal action





# Other Questions?

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- *Review **Guidance for Faith-Based and Community Organizations on Partnering with the Federal Government***
- **Follow up with the Agency Program Contact or an Agency Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives**
- **Check with a lawyer**





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